



Is the Anglican Church's Doctrine Aligned with Biblical Truth?

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The Anglican Church, also known as the English Church, has a complex history reaching as far back as the 2nd century. However, the Church's modern structure and status emerged during the reign of King Henry VIII (1509-1547), propelled by a blend of ecclesiastical, political, and personal motivations. The Church's complete independence from Rome was not asserted until Henry's reign, and despite his minimal real reform within the Church, the foundation was laid for the true English Reformation, led by Protestant Thomas Cranmer during the short reign of Henry's son, Edward VI.

The Anglican Church's doctrine is a unique fusion of Catholicism and Protestant Reformation theology. This is reflected in its authoritative declarations of belief, the Apostles' Creed and Nicene Creed, which are typically recited during worship services. However, the Church encourages an individual process of discovery and does not require complete acceptance of all the statements in these creeds. The 39 Articles, formed during the reign of Elizabeth I, further outlined the Protestant doctrine and practice of the Anglican Church but were intentionally written to allow for varied interpretations by Protestants and Catholics. The celebration of the Eucharist and the communal offering of prayer and praise through the recitation of the liturgy are central to the Anglican worship service.

Today, the Anglican Communion represents 80 million members worldwide across 38 different church organizations, including the Episcopal Church. Each church organization is self-governing under its own archbishop. However, the Archbishop of Canterbury is recognized as the spiritual head of the Church. There are also church bodies that share the historic Anglican faith but have severed ties with the main Church due to disagreements over changes in the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer, the ordination of women, and the inclusion of the LGBTQ+ community in the clergy.

Despite significant contributions to Christianity and a global influence, some Anglican Church's practices and teachings diverge in several areas from biblical principles. This article humbly and respectfully explores these areas, emphasizing the integral role of Scripture in shaping Christian thought and practice.

The Role of Tradition and Scripture

The Anglican Church follows a unique approach known as the *"via media"* or middle way, which seeks to balance Scripture, tradition, and reason. This approach, while intended to harmonize diverse perspectives, sometimes places tradition and reason on an equal footing with Scripture. The Bible emphasizes the supremacy of Scripture as the ultimate authority. In [2 Timothy 3:16-17](#), Paul writes, *"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."* Additionally, Jesus criticizes the Pharisees for placing traditions above God's commandments in [Mark 7:8](#) : *"You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions."* Elevating tradition to the same level as Scripture can lead to practices not rooted in biblical teachings.

The Ordination of Women

The Anglican Church ordains women as deacons, priests, and bishops, a practice that has gained acceptance in many parts of the Communion. This inclusion is seen as a step toward gender equality within the church. The New Testament passages addressing church leadership roles often cite male leadership. In [1 Timothy 2:12](#), Paul states, *"I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet."* Additionally, [1 Timothy 3:2](#) mentions that an overseer should be *"the husband of but one wife,"* implying a male role. While cultural contexts and interpretations vary, a strict biblical reading traditionally limits leadership roles to men.

The Acceptance of Same-Sex Relationships

Certain Anglican provinces have moved towards affirming same-sex relationships and ordaining clergy in same-sex unions. This shift reflects broader societal changes and aims to be more inclusive. The Bible consistently speaks against same-sex relationships. In [Romans 1:26-27](#), Paul describes such relationships as contrary to God's design: *"Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. In the same way, the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error."* The acceptance of same-sex relationships stands in direct opposition to these biblical teachings.

The Eucharist and Transubstantiation

The Anglican Church's understanding of the Eucharist varies, with some embracing a belief similar to transubstantiation, where the bread and wine are seen as the actual body and blood of Christ, while others view it symbolically. Jesus' institution of the Lord's Supper is recorded in the Gospels, with a focus on remembrance rather than a literal transformation. In [1 Corinthians 11:24-25](#), Paul recounts Jesus' words: *"This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me... This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."* The emphasis on remembrance suggests a symbolic understanding rather than a physical change.

Apostolic Succession and Episcopal Hierarchy

The Anglican Church upholds the doctrine of apostolic succession, believing that bishops stand in a direct, unbroken line from the apostles, giving them unique authority and grace. While apostolic succession is valued for maintaining church unity and continuity, the New Testament does not explicitly mandate such a hierarchical structure. In [Acts 20:28](#), Paul advises the Ephesian elders: *"Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood."* The focus here is on the Holy Spirit's role in appointing leaders, rather than an unbroken human lineage.

The Role of the Monarchy

The Anglican Church has a unique relationship with the British monarchy, recognizing the monarch as the Supreme Governor of the Church of England. This intertwining of church and state raises questions about the separation of religious and political authority. Jesus emphasized the distinction between religious and political realms. In [Matthew 22:21](#), He says, *"So give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."* The early church operated independently of political authority, focusing on spiritual governance. The intertwining of the church with the state can potentially compromise its spiritual mission.

Confession and Absolution

In Anglican practice, private confession and absolution are available but not mandatory. This sacrament is seen as a means of receiving God's forgiveness through the ministry of a priest. The Bible teaches that confession is important but emphasizes direct confession to God. [1 John 1:9](#) states, *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."* While [James 5:16](#) encourages believers to *"confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed,"* this does not necessarily imply the need for a priestly intermediary. Direct access to God's forgiveness through Christ is a core biblical principle.

The Use of Vestments and Liturgical Symbols

The Anglican Church uses elaborate vestments and liturgical symbols in its worship practices. These elements are intended to enhance the worship experience and reflect the church's historical continuity. While the Old Testament prescribes detailed vestments for priests ([Exodus 28](#)), the New Testament shifts the focus to spiritual worship. In [John 4:23-24](#), Jesus says, *"Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."* The simplicity of New Testament worship contrasts with elaborate liturgical practices, emphasizing a heart-centered approach.

The Practice of Infant Baptism

The Anglican Church practices infant baptism, believing it to be a means of grace and an initiation into the Christian community. The New Testament records baptisms of individuals who have made a personal profession of faith. [Acts 2:38](#) states, *"Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'"* Additionally, [Acts 8:36-37](#) describes the Ethiopian eunuch's baptism after expressing belief in Jesus. The practice of infant baptism lacks explicit biblical support, as it bypasses the personal decision to follow Christ.

The Role of Saints and Intercession

Anglican practice includes the veneration of saints and asking for their intercession, although this is more moderate compared to the Roman Catholic tradition. The Bible teaches that Jesus is the sole mediator between God and humanity. [1 Timothy 2:5](#) states, *"For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus."* While honoring the memory of faithful believers is commendable, seeking their intercession can detract from the unique mediatory role of Christ.

View on Salvation

The Anglican Church's view on salvation is characterized by a combination of faith and works, emphasizing the role of sacraments and good deeds alongside personal faith in Christ. The Bible clearly states that salvation is by grace through faith alone, not by works. [Ephesians 2:8-9](#) declares, *"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."* While good works are a natural outflow of genuine faith ([James 2:17](#): *"In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead"*), they are not the basis of salvation. This distinction is crucial to maintaining the biblical doctrine of salvation by grace alone.

Conclusion

The Anglican Church, with its historical significance and contributions to Christianity, presents a blend of practices and doctrines. While many aspects of Anglican worship and belief are rooted in Scripture, certain practices and teachings diverge from biblical principles. As followers of Christ committed to biblical truth, it is essential to continually examine our faith and practices in light of Scripture.

In humbly and respectfully evaluating these areas, we can strive for a faith that is not only rich in history but firmly anchored in the eternal Word of God. By returning to the clear teachings of the Bible, we ensure that our worship and beliefs align with God's revealed truth, fostering a deeper and more authentic relationship with Him.

May this exploration encourage a renewed commitment to biblical fidelity and a deeper engagement with Scripture, guiding us in living out our faith in accordance with God's will.

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